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# *Soy Moderno y No Quiero Locas: Queer Citizenship in Lima, Perú*

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This paper explores the LGBTQ rights movement in Lima, Peru from 1980 to the contemporary period. It uses a historically-based, ethnographic methodology to explore the LGBTQ rights movement and its mediation of transnational and domestic contexts. Particular focus is paid to the *Movimiento Homosexual de Lima* and the recent *Union Civil Ya!* campaign. It builds off existing critical scholarship examining how Latin American LGBTQ movements respond to domestic contexts and reconstruct transnational success stories. Its main claim is that although Peru's gay rights movement initially focused on intellectually-inspired, deep-seated cultural changes toward sexuality, mainstream organizations now construct claims to legitimate citizenship through an internationalist discourse that forms part of Peru's ongoing project of cultural and economic modernity. The research adds much needed context and insight on the formation of the Peruvian queer movement in an anti-democratic, conservative political context. More broadly, it demonstrates the strategies queer movements resort to in the absence of viable political and institutional alliances. Finally, it also challenges the efficacy of transnational queer collaborations based on shared economic interests and the viability of a "global" gay movement.

## **Disciplines**

Social and Behavioral Sciences | Urban Studies and Planning

## **Comments**

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*Soy Moderno y No Quiero Locas: Queer Citizenship in Lima, Perú*  
Marco Herndon, University of Pennsylvania

## **Abstract**

This paper explores the LGBTQ rights movement in Lima, Peru from 1980 to the contemporary period. It uses a historically-based, ethnographic methodology to explore the LGBTQ rights movement and its mediation of transnational and domestic contexts. Particular focus is paid to the *Movimiento Homosexual de Lima* and the recent *Union Civil Ya!* campaign. It builds off existing critical scholarship examining how Latin American LGBTQ movements respond to domestic contexts and reconstruct transnational success stories. Its main claim is that although Peru's gay rights movement initially focused on intellectually-inspired, deep-seated cultural changes toward sexuality, mainstream organizations now construct claims to legitimate citizenship through an internationalist discourse that forms part of Peru's ongoing project of cultural and economic modernity. The research adds much needed context and insight on the formation of the Peruvian queer movement in an anti-democratic, conservative political context. More broadly, it demonstrates the strategies queer movements resort to in the absence of viable political and institutional alliances. Finally, it also challenges the efficacy of transnational queer collaborations based on shared economic interests and the viability of a "global" gay movement.

## **Introduction**

The line to a free screening of the play *Un Monstruo Bajo Mi Cama* was nearly two hours long. The collective *#NoTengoMiedo* organized free screenings of the play throughout the months of May and June 2015. *#NoTengoMiedo* relies primarily on an online platform to spread-the-word about its theatre art projects and to positively portray queer people in Lima. Its name translates literally to *I'm Not Afraid*, and has become a recognizable emblem among a specific crowd of hip, modern, and young *Limeños*. At *#NoTengoMiedo*'s temporary gift shop, I saw recognizable banners with the logo *#UnionCivilYa*, in the Peruvian flag's red and white colors. Relatively new organizing efforts like *#UnionCivilYá* and *#NoTengoMiedo* have made the queer community increasingly difficult to ignore. Peru's political elite and religious leaders have confronted challenging notions of who can access Peruvian citizenship in the process.

*Un Monstruo Bajo Mi Cama*'s popularity among Lima's young and hip crowd was rooted both in its content and transcendental message of love, equality, and justice. The play consisted

of seven monologues by cisgender<sup>1</sup> gay men from an array of racial and class backgrounds. Each monologue involved a discussion of each man's respective relationship with his mother. The excitement for the play was palpable among the array of queer people surrounded me. Dispersed throughout the crowd, I saw mothers accompanying their children to the play. When I asked the gay couple in front of me how they felt about the play, they exclaimed it was part of a *turning point* in Lima's gay activism.

Such a turning point might seem refreshing for Peru's LGBTQ community. The country is one of the few remaining middle-income states in Latin America without any formalized, national protections for LGBTQ rights. Throughout the months I was in Lima, however, activists from Peru's historical gay rights organization—MHOL—expressed their skepticism about the intentions and consequences of this seemingly historical moment. For the past thirty years, MHOL had spearheaded a long tradition of LGBTQ activism. Alongside lesbian and transgender collectives, it formed the first country-wide grassroots front in 2002, the *Frente por el Derecho a ser Diferente*.<sup>2</sup> The organization also persevered across violence, from the MRTA (Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru) in the 1980s as well as police officers that have harassed individuals and organized protests well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

Although MHOL initially helped to draft the proposed legislation, discursively, civil unions exemplify a developmental, modernizing discourse that ignores Peru's long-standing police brutality, lack of democratic participation, and overall socioeconomic inequality. These issues were particularly important to the *old guard* of LGBT activism, *alongside* individual liberties like the right to enter legally recognized same-sex unions. Indeed, MHOL has largely operated without any substantial political alliances—save for its relationship with the leftist congressman Javier Diez Canseco—and meaningful celebrity endorsements. In addition to

persevering through threats of violence, it also maintained a viable organization throughout the authoritarian Fujimori era of the 1990s. While waiting for the play to begin at the theatre, I wondered: what exactly led to this historical moment? What type of politics do *#NoTengoMiedo* and *#UnionCivilYá* subscribe to? What made them seemingly distinct from groups like MHOL?

Through a historically-based ethnographic analysis of the contemporary Peruvian LGBT movement, this essay speaks to the societal and cultural encounters unfolding in a diverse set of queer spaces—both historically and contemporaneously. These voices contradict, confuse, and reaffirm the myth of global LGBTQ progress. I argue that although Peru’s gay rights movement initially focused on intellectually-inspired, deep-seated cultural changes toward sexuality, mainstream organizations now construct claims to legitimate citizenship through an internationalist discourse that forms part of Peru’s ongoing project of cultural and economic modernity.

### **Theoretical Framework & Literature Review**

I approach modernity as the “tension between autonomy and fragmentation.”<sup>4</sup> Specifically, my research understands modernity as the “autonomy of the Subject...the self-assertion of the self” and as “a social project [that] destroys its own cultural foundations.”<sup>5</sup> The individual rights-based framework of *#UnionCivilYá!* aligns with this autonomous subjectivity. In terms of modernity’s relationship to cultural erasure, although literature on Latin America and modernity has focused on how both, as concepts, are “mutually excluding phenomena,”<sup>6</sup> I agree with Jorge Larraín’s argument that “Latin America has been simultaneously constructing its cultural identity and modernizing.”<sup>7</sup>

I depart from his analysis, however, by arguing the Latin American cultural identity that emerges from modernization is the result of strategic cultural erasure. In Peru, Gonzalo

Portocarrero argues that modernity has led to an “idea of creole nationalism”<sup>8</sup> that rejects ethnic fragmentation by disavowing indigenous identity and wholly reconstructing a Peruvian interpretation of European culture. I employ this understanding of modernity within the context of Peru throughout my discussion of queer movement’s individual rights-based framework.

Recent scholarship has wrestled with analyzing Latin American LGBTQ movements vis-à-vis transnational influences. Part of this avoids centering US-hegemonic queer discourse that fails to recognize Latin American countries like Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay passed progressive LGBTQ legislation during the socially conservative U.S. Bush era. At the same time, transnational influences on a discursive and material level are undeniable. Latin American movements have negotiated and contested transnational LGBTQ discourse. Parker, for example, argues that Afro-Brazilian gay rights organizations have pursued strategies that recuperate positive, religious *Candomblé* understandings of homosexuality, directly contradicting the largely secular strategies of US-hegemonic movements.<sup>9</sup> Rafael Dehesa points out that early Brazilian and Mexican queer activists did not blindly exploit Western models of gay activism. Instead, these activists constructed movements using transnational and national influences simultaneously, where “changes in one field, say at the transnational level, permit actors to challenge [identity] constructions at others.”<sup>10</sup>

This position markedly contrasts with political scientist Javier Corrales. He conceptualizes a more positive and less nuanced understanding between globalization and Latin America, arguing that “LGBT movements...[are] beneficiaries and exploiters of globalization.”<sup>11</sup> More recently, however, Corrales has acknowledged the nuanced effect of transnationalism, stating that “understanding the clashes among this type of ‘activism beyond borders’ and...its often controversial impact at the local level is indispensable.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Oscar Encarnación

argues scholars like Dehesa over-emphasize domestic conditions in Latin America and as a result “ignore or undervalue how the domestic context interacts with external influence.”<sup>13</sup> For good measure, Encarnación also rejects the conventional wisdom that “leads to serious distortions and misinterpretations about Latin American gay history.”<sup>14</sup> However, he argues scholarship should strike a middle ground by focusing on how the “domestic environment has mediated external influence with respect to gay rights.”<sup>15</sup>

How has transnational gay and lesbian rhetoric played out discursively in Peru? Peruvian sociologist Angelica Motta argues that even as Western understandings of homosexuality have entered the urban Lima sphere, *Limeños* who have sex with men have not readily embraced these notions. Motta identifies a worldview where being a *traditional gay* means assimilating to stereotypical notions of homosexuality (where the gay man is seen as feminine). On the other hand a *modern gay* requires assimilating differently, to being “less *loca* [literally translated as crazy, but in this context, feminized hysteria] and being more *buses*, or discreet.”<sup>16</sup> Peruvian gay men thus negotiate transnational influences according to their own understandings of gender and sexuality. Though in other countries an intentionally discreet and overt, masculine gay man might be interpreted as closeted and repressed, in Lima such a man symbolizes assimilatory progress.

Judith Butler posits that activism beyond borders must undergo cross-cultural translations, otherwise “the only way...universality can cross a border...[is] through colonial and expansionist logic.”<sup>17</sup> However, she reduces universal claims to their inherent cultural contamination and neglects more complicated outcomes. Anne Tsing’s conceptualization of the translation of universal claims as encounters laced by *friction*, which disrupts the dichotomy of the *global* imposing on the *local*, informs much of my thinking. She argues *friction* “inspi[re]

expansion—for both the powerful and the powerless.”<sup>18</sup> Tsing fills the missing theoretical link between Encarnacion and Dehesa. This discussion, however, only addresses the “foreign/transnational” dimension of the transnational-domestic interactions I seek to analyze in the LGBTQ rights movement of Peru. What about Peru’s domestic context?

Portocarrero argues that the Peruvian nation-state should allow citizens to recognize unity across difference, but in Peru “racism and the colonial order...contaminate[s] daily life.”<sup>19</sup> In terms of modernity’s cultural erasure, he proposes a new *criollismo* that celebrates Peruvian indigeneity as unique on the world stage. However, this celebration simultaneously participates in cultural as well as historical erasure (forming part of modernity). *Criollismo* envisions Peru as a “fabulous reality where the past is still alive”<sup>20</sup> and thus imposes a superficial representation of indigeneity and national unity.

In such a terrain of contested citizenship, what type of movement and voice do queer Peruvians create? Is unity across difference useful, or would its productivity be only surface-level? Furthermore, what transnational claims and myths have dominant Peruvian queer movements reconstructed and employed in their activism?

My research contributes to existing scholarship in two primary ways. First, I add greater dimension to scholarship concerning Latin American queer movements by expanding the focus beyond larger localities in the region like Brazil and Argentina. Peruvian queer movements have operated in a political context dominated by socially and economically conservative leadership, which was not characteristic of other players in the region. Secondly, my interdisciplinary methodology foregrounds the lived experience of queer, activist Peruvians based on primary source analysis and ethnographic data itself. It thus provides much-needed nuance in the field of



Latin American queer studies, where analyses have largely focused on the top-bottom relationship between institutions and society.

### **Queer Formations**

In November 1980, Peruvian sociologist Roberto Miro Quesada reportedly called his friend, economist Oscar Ugarteche, to ask he urgently meet with the philosopher Michel Foucault at NYU. As the story goes, Ugarteche was then living in New York and Miro Quesada was interested in creating a new group that explored homosexuality.<sup>21</sup> He had learned Foucault was lecturing at NYU's Humanities Institute and sought his advice regarding strategies for gay activism. Today, Ugarteche recounts this story as the unlikely stepping stone for Peru's longest running gay rights group: MHOL. What did it mean that a pair of light-skinned, gay male intellectuals pointed to a conversation with a famous French philosopher in New York as a place of origin for their emerging movement thousands of miles away?

Oral histories from the organization's original founders combined with supplementary primary source analysis reveals MHOL's initial members benefited from cultural and social capital, but that they were invested in a radical form of social change. Their activism was informed by social theory. Moreover, MHOL's activists needed this social capital to access information about gay and lesbian activism abroad and gain attention from the media and politicians. However, this high-level foundation made MHOL's leadership too insular to build the grassroots movement necessary for large-scale positive change.

Ugarteche's and Miro Quesada's identities as intellectuals dominated MHOL's initial period. Both leaders were "engaged in intellectual competition and disposed to a very *limeñan* feud predicated on two [powerful] last names."<sup>22</sup> A memory document that synthesizes the impressions of MHOL's history describes Miro Quesada as a moderate leftist sociologist of the

“Chicago school,” which differentiated him from “OU [Oscar Ugarteche] [who] was of the very radical PUM (Partido Unido Mariateguista).”<sup>23</sup>

The early state of MHOL was thus dominated by high-level intellectual debates and personalities. Figures like RMQ and OU were pre-disposed to transnational news and influences. The document confirms Ugarteche’s conversation with Foucault, stating that “RMQ [Roberto Miro Quesada] asked OU to contact...New York’s gay leftists. Simultaneously, OU learns of Foucault’s theory on the rainbow of sexuality through personal conversations.” What followed were “more systematic conversations...of 10 to 12 people, men and women, with the purpose to reflect over the meaning of being gay or lesbian in Peru.”<sup>24</sup>

Most of the participants in these early conversations and meetings were university students. In the 1980s, Enrique Bossio—one of the participants—found refuge in a group of people that had been “organizing theatrical and social events for more than two years.”<sup>25</sup> Ugarteche identifies this culturally-informed intellectual space as the basis for MHOL, explaining he and his peers “needed to create a neutral space...where people could come from the street and be engaged.”<sup>26</sup> The group organized theatre nights every Friday during the summer of 1985 where “we would watch a play and at the end we would pass around the wine and open the discussion...it became the intellectual craze of the summer of 1985.”<sup>27</sup>

Ugarteche’s use of *intellectual* and Bossio’s university background (from a prestigious private university, the Catholic University of Peru) indicate the terms of inclusion for the group were highly exclusive. MHOL’s founding document—a manifesto—complements Bossio’s recollections of the 1980s. Its driving mission is “that homosexual men and women of Peru acquire real consciousness of their situation and organize to defend their rights as citizens.”<sup>28</sup> Members of MHOL’s initial organizing committees were certainly aware of their isolation from

what they referred to as *clases populares*, or lower-middle class people. A man with the initials CID described MHOL's attempts to connect with people outside its insular social circle.

"I would think why not hang out with other types of people. What would be the place to meet [these people]? Volleyball. Because volleyball, for whatever reason in this country, is a sport where many gays converge. [And]...it connected the two worlds. The popular world and the middle class world. [Volleyball was] the equivalent to *popular* dining halls."<sup>29</sup>

MHOL was fully conscious of the lack of grassroots participation in its "movement." The practice of "seeking out" the popular classes, however, ineffectively diversified its membership. According to CID, the volleyball games quickly became "not spaces for socialization...The volleyball game would end and the [the players] from San Martin would return to their bars to drink."<sup>30</sup> The strategy was ineffective because it was patronizing; CID assumed volleyball games were natural environments for *clases populares* and thus spaces for consciousness-raising. Instead, to his and MHOL's disappointment, volleyball ended up being just that: a sport.

Later on in the decade, MHOL prioritized HIV/AIDS prevention and outreach. It largely relied on foreign funding due to a paucity of domestic funding sources. Thus, MHOL "sen[t] a project to Holland, to the Novib [Dutch Organization for International AID]...in October of 1985 MHOL' receives a letter announcing the approval of the project and a congratulatory letter from John Schlanger...it was the first time the Dutch NGO financed a homosexual movement."<sup>31</sup> By the late 1980s, MHOL became one of the few organizations that "related the fight against AIDS with affirming an alternative sexuality," and from 1989 and 1993, cooperated extensively with USAID to "organize workshops on safe sex and counseling that attracted more than 1,000 people, in addition to establishing a telephone service that provided answers to more than 3,000 people."<sup>32</sup>

The 1990s witnessed significant legal and social obstacles for MHOL. The political climate prevented the formation of a strong, grassroots base of support. Then-President Alberto Fujimori was infamous for an autocratic presidential style, closing Congress in 1992 in a sudden *Auto-Coup*.<sup>33</sup> In December 1992, over 117 Peruvian diplomats were fired by the government of then President Alberto Fujimori. The action provoked outrage among Peru's ruling class. *El Comercio*, the paper-of-record, described it as "a flagrant slap in the face for Foreign Service personnel...there is no valid explanation for the [government's] announcement of the censure of these functionaries."<sup>34</sup> The newspaper hesitated to publish the government's invalid explanation for the firing: the government accused the diplomats of having gay sex. Bossio reacted angrily to the anti-democratic nature of the firings, but felt they were symptoms of the country's rampant homophobia "supported by the majority of the population."<sup>35</sup>

In an interview, a prominent lesbian activist<sup>36</sup> argues the group suffered from a lack of grassroots focus. The political climate may have been hostile, but she describes the small circle Bossio and Ugarteche formed as undesiring of new ideas: "MHOL did not place young people as leaders in the 1990s."<sup>37</sup> The organization's absent grassroots base and generational diversity was apparent in its reaction to events like the firing of the diplomats. Ugarteche led MHOL's response through high-level mediums. He describes writing a letter to *Caretas*, a highbrow publication with an upper-class, intellectual readership.<sup>38</sup> This action mirrored the type of activism even Bossio ultimately questioned:

"What I fear is that in our efforts to fit into the mainstream we were not successful in changing the opinion people have...the transvestites and the hair stylists—the most visible part of the homosexual community—will continue to be discriminated against and marginalized."<sup>39</sup>

What did grassroots demonstrations look like throughout the 1990s? The protestors represented in the photograph below (Figure 1) were four of the 25 activists that formed Lima's first gay public demonstration in 1995. Held in the *Parque Kennedy* of Lima's upper-middle class district Miraflores, the march lacked the vivacity of similar events staged across Latin America at the time. One newspaper at the time recounted that “dozens of police officers surrounded and maintained their [the protestors'] place.”<sup>40</sup> Another activist—Aldo Araujo—described the march as consisting of “motivational phrases written on poster boards that manifested our discontent with a society that did not include all people with their rights.”<sup>41</sup>

Nonetheless, activists did not consider these assemblies of people marches *per se*, instead, they were precursors to Lima's first major, publically recognized gay pride march in 2002.<sup>42</sup> As Jorge Chavez, another major gay activist recalls, “the first...was a meeting with a pedestal where music would be played, but I would always see that other countries realized marches already for many years and it was something that we were looking to organize.”<sup>43</sup>



Figure 1: Protestors at Lima's First Gay Pride March in 1995. Source: SinEtiquetas

Peru's volatile domestic context was not the only limiting factor in the gay movement's lack of a substantive march. Due to internal political divisions, MHOL's influence had also declined. At the time, the horizontal leadership that previously characterized the organization had gradually died down. MHOL's memory document explains:

“at first the group was very integrated, everyone would make democratic decisions, by majority vote, we would discuss and heavily analyze until the end. We were part of the same, we did not have an institution but we had ourselves. Now instead every decision is made by an executive.”<sup>44</sup>

Thus, MHOL’s professionalization worked against its effectiveness. In a time of political discontent, what MHOL needed was grassroots outreach based on demands for democratic participation. However, as the document later adds, “now everyone wants to be respectable. There is a new cultural moment.”<sup>45</sup>

### A New Cultural Moment?

What does this new cultural moment look like? The picture depicting the city’s highly attended gay pride march in 2015 stands in stark contrast to the picture in 1995. In many ways, the picture represents a diverse and grassroots social justice movement. In recent years, the gay pride march has received widespread attention. In many ways, it includes the *clases populares* CID aptly described. Popular media outlets with wide appeal like *Peru21*, (akin to *USA Today*), covered the event, even shared the official Twitter hashtag, #YoMarcho.<sup>46</sup>



Figure 2: 14th Gay Pride March held in Lima, Perú. Source: Peru21

The image of the march illustrates the vibrancy triggered by *Union Civil Ya*’s increasing momentum. Rainbow flags extending into the crowd display a sense of mass affirmation the

1995 depiction simply lacked. The balloon-made *Love* banner and the rainbow flags themselves, of course, point to the march's participation in universal gay pride symbols. At the same time, the march participants demand inclusion as Peruvian citizens. The crowd members holding red and white Peruvian flags affirm their sexual identity is not mutually exclusive with their citizenship, although the rainbows might suggest otherwise.

This affirmation persists throughout *Union Civil Ya's* campaign marketing materials. Its widely circulated red and white online poster, (Figure 3), evokes Peruvian patriotism. The joining of hands into a heart encircling an equality sign further implores the message that the Civil Union movement promotes national unity and not divisiveness.



Figure 1: Translation - Civil Unions Now! Together for Equality

*Equality* not only consists of *equal love*, as the heart implies, but also simultaneously *equal citizenship*.

An interview with an academic named Francisco<sup>47</sup> illustrates these themes in greater detail. Francisco has been involved in activism since the 1980s and now enjoys a relatively high degree of institutional legitimacy. After asking Francisco about the civil union campaign's potential, he expressed optimism as the "topic...[is] not necessarily seen as progressive...or

leftist. It's about being modern.”<sup>48</sup> An overarching theme in the interview was that civil unions represented a modern, conservative strategy for LGBTQ people in Peru to gain civil rights. Francisco framed the issue as a top-down political strategy that would be inevitably successful. He thus takes Peru's desire to be *modern* as an interest shared by all and not split ideologically. He also framed the desire for modernity vis-à-vis transnational comparison with other Latin American countries, saying that “nowadays you have people visiting Chile and there are civil unions there, and Argentina—so you start realizing, people start realizing that the country is backward.”<sup>49</sup>

These excerpts reveal Francisco defines modernity not only through an inevitable notion that Peru is on a linear trajectory towards modernization, but also in relation to progress in seemingly more modern Latin American countries as well as the West more broadly. He dismisses voices within the community that criticize the movement's focus on civil unions, arguing this legislation—more so than an anti-discrimination bill—will provide the foundation needed to gain legal and social recognition. As he states, “it [civil unions] makes you into a citizen. In equal terms...I think that civil unions provide grassroots support and...generate debate on sexuality.” Francisco's comments reveal that he views civil unions as a source of unity with the potential to resonate among a wide array of *straight* Peruvians.

This vision contrasts sharply with MHOL's Executive Director, Giovanni Infante. MHOL's headquarters are located in a less glamorous and exclusive environment. In many ways, MHOL's location of an area in Jesus Maria that borders downtown Lima stands in stark contrast to Francisco's office (in Miraflores). The promise of a new, modern Peru lies in districts like Miraflores, where tourists and Starbucks coffee shops abound next to the city's most popular gay bar, *Downtown Vale Todo*.



These differences of place manifest themselves in Francisco's comment that activists like Gio—who did not oppose civil unions *per se* but rather their prioritization—were “conservative.”<sup>50</sup> Gio refuted Francisco's comments as misinterpretations. The MHOL director emphatically insisted he was supportive of civil unions, claiming MHOL “wrote the proposed legislation and had the political connections for it to receive a fair hearing in Congress.”<sup>51</sup> He explained his hesitation was due to the mainstream attention civil unions absorbed. Especially, he argued, when “there are hundreds of murders every year against transgender sex workers, when there are homeless youth in shantytowns who don't care whether they can get married.”<sup>52</sup>

Gio's comments illustrate a key difference between his and Francisco's style of activism. Infante ascribes to a bottom-up approach to activism. He repeatedly emphasizes challenges pertinent to the most marginalized queer people. Indeed, Gio relates to his sexual identity from a completely different cultural position. He identifies as “a *cholo* (a derogative term for dark-skinned *mestizos*) *pobreton* (extremely poor), and an unashamed member of the *mariconada*.”<sup>53</sup> Infante intentionally constructs his identity across sexuality, economic class, and race. He recuperates the word *maricon*, (faggot)—like he does with *cholo*—to draw attention to the fact he speaks from a place of marginalization. Gio's self-identification complicates the view of citizenship *Union Civil Ya* puts forth. By coupling his identity as a *cholo* and a member of the *mariconada*, he asks how civil unions will make him a citizen, when his rights are still constrained by the marginalization of his other identities.

What is the basis for the form of Peruvian citizenship *Union Civil Ya!* subscribes to? An analysis of the Third LGBT Summit of the Americas, held in Lima from May 28<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, offers insight. The summit was sponsored by the US National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, the US Agency for International Development, and the newly formed Peruvian Chamber of

LGBT Commerce. *Union Civil Ya!* had a strong presence at the summit. One of the summit's keynote speakers was Carlos Bruce, Peru's first openly gay congressman and since coming out, a visible proponent of civil unions. As the list of summit sponsors indicates, the event focused less on the specific particularities of the Peruvian LGBT movement and instead on its economic potential.

The stakeholders of the summit had different objectives. NGLCC's effort was to "convene...entrepreneurs, business leaders, and government officials to discuss issues surrounding diversity and LGBT economic inclusion."<sup>54</sup> The organization also professed a third goal: advancing free-market oriented development for LGBT rights in Peru. NGLCC's director opened the summit by welcoming the audience to an "economic movement focused on economic inclusion," demonstrated by "corporate sponsors that see the value of supplier diversity."<sup>55</sup> NGLCC's Assistant Director clarified the ties between economic inclusion and LGBTQ. She explained the organization believes "supporting the advancement of LGBT-owned business is the quickest and most efficient way to secure LGBT progress," pointing to the strategy's success in "the U.S., Colombia, Argentina."<sup>56</sup>

The remarks made by the NGLCC representatives strive to create a connection between economic inclusiveness and LGBTQ rights. By calling economic entrepreneurship the most effective way to secure LGBTQ progress, they implicitly recognize universal rights like equality and self-expression are easier to achieve with financial leverage. What was less clear from their speeches was the reasoning behind their interest in promoting LGBTQ entrepreneurship *in Peru*. Brian Nichols, the US Ambassador to Peru, clarified this ambiguity. At the time, a pressing bilateral issue was Peru's inclusion in the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The trade agreement was a top priority for the Obama Administration, and the ambassador praised it as potentially bringing

“\$45 billion dollars in investment to Peru...which the LGBT community in Peru should demand to be a part of.”<sup>57</sup>

Peruvian activists interpreted these remarks as validation for the potential of LGBTQ Peruvians and the country as a whole. During the breakfast before the conference, an organizer told me she and other activists had “many expectations for the conference...we’re excited to see what the presenters can offer us.”<sup>58</sup> At the summit’s evening cocktail, an American businessman received thunderous applause after he explained his numerous investments in the country were the result of him having tasted “excellent Peruvian food.”<sup>59</sup>

Foreign stakeholders’ interests in expanding economic opportunity and growth thus did not diverge remarkably from the Peruvian stakeholders and activists present at the summit. Peru is a country where *Limeños* herald new restaurant openings as signs of Peruvian superiority and GDP growth rates are common knowledge for even modest market-sellers. Economic growth has seemingly made the country’s authoritarian and violent recent past seem like a distant nightmare. The summit’s appeal and a piece of the TPP’s \$45 billion pie appealed not only monetarily, but also from the possibility of LGBTQ Peruvians forming part of the ideals of development dominant in the national landscape. Alongside the potential legalization of civil unions, the NGLCC’s message seemed to show queer and professionalized Peruvians a path towards becoming first-class Peruvian citizens.

## **Conclusion**

*Union Civil Ya!* and the positive catalyst it represents for the LGBTQ movement is tantalizing. Its political strategy in many ways emulates civil union-now, marriage equality-later structure of the US gay rights movement. It has cultivated a level of engagement unseen in the past, evidenced by events like the well-attended screening of *Un Monstrou Bajo Mi Cama*.

Campaign marketing materials and ethnographic observations of its organizing spaces presents a far more complex picture. The campaign also appeals to Peru's larger economic aspiration, as the discourse at the Third LGBT Summit of the Americas shows. LGBTQ Peruvians' aspirations for civil unions and become important economic actors is consistent with Portocarrero's observation of emergent *nueva cultura* nationalism. For Tsing, this aspiration confirms the reality that so-called "peripheral" communities make sense of a global ideal like gay rights according to what their context demands.

The path towards social progress across the globe, in terms of LGBT rights or otherwise, is increasingly difficult to chart and understand. Circulation of news is accessible to a broader audience and faster than ever before. Yet the all-knowing spread of knowledge that characterizes this information age has not led to neat global homogenization. The ideal of a global community and global gay rights seems more like a performance than a reality; every stakeholder negotiates their roles as situations evolve.

A scene from the LGBT summit concretely captures this idea. As I sat down for the summit's lunch with a few Peruvian transgender activists, one looked at the soufflé we were served and remarked: "Where's *our* [my emphasis] Peruvian food?" The servers subsequently scoured the kitchen for hot Peruvian pepper sauce to please my new friends. They brought back tabasco. Frustrated, I quickly ran to a vegetable stand outside and purchased spicy red peppers. Using a knife and lime juice, I made classic *aji* for everyone to enjoy. The whole affair seized the group's attention, and soon everyone commented on the lack of Peruvian food. We had all just idealized ourselves as members of a global community, yet here we were combatting over what Butler would call cultural contamination. The lime juice and hot pepper literally and figuratively cleared our senses to the reality that we were not, and perhaps could never be, the same.

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> Denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their assigned birth sex

<sup>2</sup> Jennie, Dador Tozzini Ma., and Angélica Motta. *Perú: Políticas En Sexualidad*. (Lima: Universidad Nacional Mayor De San Marcos Fondo Editorial, 2010), 98

<sup>3</sup> Jennie, Dador Tozzini Ma., and Angélica Motta. *Perú: Políticas En Sexualidad*. (Lima: Universidad Nacional Mayor De San Marcos Fondo Editorial, 2010), 95

<sup>4</sup> Delanty, Gerard. *Social Theory in a Changing World: Conceptions of Modernity*. (Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 1999), 3

<sup>5</sup> Delanty, Gerard. *Social Theory in a Changing World: Conceptions of Modernity*. (Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 1999), 3

<sup>6</sup> Larraín, Jorge. *Identity and Modernity in Latin America*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000), p. 7

<sup>7</sup> Larraín, Jorge. *Identity and Modernity in Latin America*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000), p. 7

<sup>8</sup> Maisch, Gonzalo Portocarrero. *La Urgencia Por Decir "nosotros": Los Intelectuales Y La Idea De Nación En El Perú Republicano*. (Primera ed. Pontificia Universidad Catolica Del Perú, 2015), 15.

- “la propuesta de un nacionalismo criollo, de un proyecto de colectividad centrado en el olvido de la fragmentación étnica en el común empeño de imitar lo europeo y rechazar lo indígena”

<sup>9</sup> "Sexuality and the Contemporary World: Globalization and Sexual Rights." In *A Global History of Sexuality: The Modern Era*, Edited by Robert Buffington, Written by Richard Parker et. al. (1st ed. New York City: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 239

<sup>10</sup> Dehesa, Rafael. “Hybrid Modernities.” In *Queering the Public Sphere in Mexico and Brazil: Sexual Rights Movements in Emerging Democracies*. (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 23

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- <sup>11</sup> Corrales, Javier. Pecheny, Mario, ed. "Comparative Politics of Sexuality in Latin America." In *The Politics of Sexuality in Latin America: A Reader on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights*. (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 23
- <sup>12</sup> Corrales, Javier. "The Politics of LGBT Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean: Research Agendas." *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* (100, no. December 2015), 58
- <sup>13</sup> Encarnación, Omar Guillermo. *Out in the Periphery Latin America's Gay Rights Revolution*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7
- <sup>14</sup> Encarnación, Omar Guillermo. *Out in the Periphery Latin America's Gay Rights Revolution*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6
- <sup>15</sup> Encarnación, Omar Guillermo. *Out in the Periphery Latin America's Gay Rights Revolution*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7
- <sup>16</sup> "Entre lo tradicional y lo moderno: La construcción de identidades homosexuales en Lima." In *De Amores Y Luchas: Diversidad Sexual, Derechos Humanos Y Ciudadanía*. Edited by Allán, Jorge Bracamonte, Written by Motta, Angelica. (Lima: Centro De La Mujer Peruana "Flora Tristán", 2001. Print), 151
- "los gays modernos son definidos por ser menos loca y ser mas *buses*, o discretos"
- <sup>17</sup> Butler, Judith, and Ernesto Laclau. "Restaging the Universal." In *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. (London: Verso, 2000), 35
- <sup>18</sup> *Friction*. Tsing, Anne. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. Print), 9
- <sup>19</sup> Maisch, Gonzalo Portocarrero. *La Urgencia Por Decir "nosotros": Los Intelectuales Y La Idea De Nación En El Perú Republicano*. (Primera ed. Pontificia Universidad Catolica Del Perú, 2015), 19
- **Original Spanish:** "en el Perú, el racismo y el orden colonial continúan marcando la vida cotidiana pese a la legalidad republicana y la consagración formal del principio de igualdad de derechos"
- <sup>20</sup> Maisch, Gonzalo Portocarrero. *La Urgencia Por Decir "nosotros": Los Intelectuales Y La Idea De Nación En El Perú Republicano*. (Primera ed. Pontificia Universidad Catolica Del Perú, 2015), "una realidad fabulosa donde el pasado está vivo" (345)
- <sup>21</sup> A note on language: whenever possible, I prefer to use the acronym LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) instead of the word *queer*. While *queer* is gender inclusive and represents a spectrum of sexual identities, I found it confusing to use *queer* when there was no

direct translation of the word in Spanish. However, for the sake of clarity and word variation, I interchange LGBTQ and queer. Finally, I use *gay rights* or *gay* when speaking of movements that primarily focused on gay men and women or when referring to the sexual identity of gay men and women. In the appropriate context, I also use variations of *lesbian*, but as an adjective instead of a noun. To be clear, many of my informants used *gai* and *LGBT* interchangeably in Spanish, but this liberal use of the terms is not intelligible to an English-speaking audience.

<sup>22</sup> Document: Memoria Historica del MHOL, 2

- “A la base parece estar la competencia intelectual entre ellos y el destaque social muy a la limeña de pagna entre dos apellidos.”

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<sup>23</sup> Document: Memoria Historica del MHOL, 3

- “Roberto procedia...de Chicago...Ambos eran de izquierda, pero OU era del PUM muy radical”

<sup>24</sup> Document: Memoria Historica del MHOL, 3

- “RMQ solicita a OU que lo contacte con...la izquierda Gay neoyorquina en New York. Simultaneamente OU a través de conversaciones personales con Foucault conoce su teoria sobre el arco iris de la sexualidad.”
- “conversaciones más sistemáticas...de 10 a 12 personas entre hombres y mujeres, tenían por finalidad reflexionar sobre el significado de ser gay o lesbian en el Perú”

<sup>25</sup> Starn, Orin. "Interview with a Gay Activist." In *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 502

<sup>26</sup> Ugarteche Interview, November 2015

<sup>27</sup> Ugarteche Interview, November 2015

<sup>28</sup> MHOL 1er. Manifiesto. Marzo 1983, Lima.

- “Para que los hombres y mujeres homosexuales del Perú adquirieran una concienicia real de su situació y se agrupen en defensa de sus derechos ciudadanos.”

<sup>29</sup> Document: Memoria Historica del MHOL, p. 6

- “Yo me decia porque no se junta con otra tipo de gente [*sic*]. Cual puede ser el punto de encuentro? El voley. Porque el voley, por alguna razon en este pais, ha sido un deporte donde han convergido muchos gay...conectaba los dos mundos. El mundo popular y el mundo de la clase media. El equivalente...a los comedores populares, eran los grupos de voley.”

<sup>30</sup> Document: Memoria Historica del MHOL, p. 6

- “se vuelve un espacio de socializacion sino que cada vez...se vuleve un asunto de competencia...terminaba el partido de voley y los de San Martin regresaban a sus cantinas a chupar.”

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- <sup>31</sup> Document: Memoria Historica del MHOL, p. 15
- “enviar un proyecto a Holanda, a Novib...En octubre de 1985 se recibe una carta que anuncia la aprobación del Proyecto y una carta de felicitación de John Schlanger...pues es la primera vez que una ONG Holandesa financia a un movimiento homosexual.”
- <sup>32</sup> Cueto, Marcos. *Culpa y coraje. Historia de las políticas sobre el VIH/Sida en el Perú*: (Lima: Consorcio de Investigación Económica y Social/Facultad de Salud Pública y Administración, Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, 2001), 80-81
- <sup>35</sup> Starn, Orin. "Interview with a Gay Activist." In *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 504
- <sup>36</sup> The activist wished to remain anonymous. She is still a living figure and does not want her comments to affect her relationships.
- <sup>37</sup> Anonymous Interview May 2015
- <sup>38</sup> Ugarteche Interview November 2015
- <sup>39</sup> Starn, Orin. "Interview with a Gay Activist." In *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 505
- <sup>40</sup> “Movimientos LGBT: por que olvidan su historia?” *Revista Semana*. 3 June 2009. <http://www.semana.com/Imprimir/320508>
- <sup>41</sup> *Por Una Sociedad Joven Inclusive: Compilación De Trabajos Sobre Jovenes Trans, Lesbianas, Gays Y Bisexuales*. Secretaría Nacional de la Juventud & Achahuanco, René Galarreta: (SENAJU, 8 March 2013), 52:
- “Con lemas escritos en cartulinas se manifestaba nuestro descontento con la sociedad que no incluía a las personas con todos sus derechos.”
- <sup>42</sup> *Por Una Sociedad Joven Inclusive: Compilación De Trabajos Sobre Jovenes Trans, Lesbianas, Gays Y Bisexuales*. Secretaría Nacional de la Juventud & Achahuanco, René Galarreta: (SENAJU, 8 March 2013), 45
- <sup>43</sup> *Por Una Sociedad Joven Inclusive: Compilación De Trabajos Sobre Jovenes Trans, Lesbianas, Gays Y Bisexuales*. Secretaría Nacional de la Juventud & Achahuanco, René Galarreta: (SENAJU, 8 March 2013), 56:
- “La primera vez fue en el Parque Kennedy y era una reunión con un estrado en el que ponían música, pero siempre veía que en otros países se realizaban marchas hacía muchos años y era algo que estábamos buscando organizar.”



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- <sup>44</sup> Document: Memoria Historica del MHOL, 30
- “Al inicio el grupo era muy integrado, todos tomaban las decisiones democraticamente, por mayoría de votos, se discutía y analizaba minuciosamente hasta el final. Eramos parte de lo mismo, no teniamos institucion pero eramos nosotros. Ahora en cambio la decision la toma el ejecutivo del directivo.”
- <sup>45</sup> Document: Memoria Historica del MHOL, 30
- “Ahora todos quieren ser decentes. Hay otro momento cultural.”
- <sup>46</sup> “#YoMarcho: Así se vivió la marcha del Orgullo Gay en Lima.” *Peru 21*. 27 June 2015. <http://peru21.pe/actualidad/yomarcho-asi-se-vive-marcha-orgullo-gay-lima-fotos-y-videos-2221833>
- <sup>47</sup> I have chosen to use a pseudonym for this interviewee as my research might inadvertently compromise their public position.
- <sup>48</sup> Personal Interview. May 2015.
- <sup>49</sup> Personal Interview. May 2015.
- <sup>50</sup> Interview. May 2015.
- <sup>51</sup> Gio Infante Interview, May 2015.
- <sup>52</sup> Gio Infante Interview, May 2015.
- <sup>53</sup> Gio Infante Interview, May 2015.
- <sup>54</sup> Excerpt from 3<sup>rd</sup> LGBT Summit of the Americas Brochure.
- <sup>55</sup> Excerpt from personal recording of the 3<sup>rd</sup> LGBT Summit of the Americas, May 2015.
- <sup>56</sup> Personal recording of the 3<sup>rd</sup> LGBT Summit of the Americas, May 2015.
- <sup>57</sup> Personal recording of the 3<sup>rd</sup> LGBT Summit of the Americas, May 2015.
- <sup>58</sup> Fieldnote, May 2015.
- <sup>59</sup> Fieldnote, May 2015.

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